

Message Text

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TAGS: PEPR, NP, IN

SUBJECT: NEPALESE PRESS COMMENT ON PRIME MINISTER DESAI'S STATEMENT ON SIKKIM

1. AMONG THE SEVERAL NEPALESE NEWSPAPERS WHICH HAVE COMMENTED ON PRIME MINISTER DESAI'S STATEMENT THAT INDIA'S ANNEXATION OF SIKKIM WAS A WRONG STEP WHICH HAD WORRIED MANY OF INDIA'S NEIGHBORS, OPINION HAS BEEN UNANIMOUS THAT DESAI'S STATEMENT NOT ONLY JUSTIFIES THE APPREHENSION THAT WAS FELT BY NEPAL AT THE TIME BUT ALSO CONSTITUTES GROUNDS FOR CONTINUING SUSPICIONS OF INDIAN INTENTIONS. THE GIST OF EDITORIAL COMMENT IS THAT DESAI'S ADMISSION OF ERROR ON INDIA'S PART WITHOUT TAKING STEPS TO RECTIFY IT CONSTITUTES, AS ONE PAPER PUTS IT, "A GLARING EXAMPLE OF DISCREPANCY BETWEEN THE WORDS AND DEEDS OF INDIA".

2. THE STRONGEST AND PERHAPS MOST SIGNIFICANT REACTION HAS COME FROM HIMALI BELA (AN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PAPER BE- LONGING TO THE KING'S BROTHER-IN-LAW, KHADGA BIKRAM SHAH) WHICH TERMS THIS ANNEXATION OF SIKKIM "THE MOST SHAMEFUL POLITICAL ACT MODERN HISTORY HAS EVER SEEN". NOTING THAT DESAI "MIGHT HAVE UNDERSTOOD BEFORE-

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HAND THAT ONCE HE TOOK SUCH A POSITION, EVEN IF IN A PERSONAL CAPACITY, IT WOULD BE REGARDED BY NEIGHBORS AS A VINDICATION OF THEIR STAND AND THEY WOULD THEN EXPECT HIM TO INITIATE MEASURES TOWARD RECTIFYING THAT MISTAKE", THE EDITORIAL SAYS DESAI "HAS PRESENTED A TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF INDIAN LEADERS WHO SOUND SANCTIMONIOUS WHILE TALKING ABOUT NATIONAL AND INTER-

NATIONAL POLITICS BUT WHO SELDOM PRACTICE WHAT THEY PREACH". THE EDITORIAL CONCLUDES: "MR. DESAI'S REMARKS ABOUT SIKKIM PRESENT A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF THE WIDE GAP BETWEEN PRACTICE AND PRECEPT FOR WHICH INDIAN POLITICAL LEADERS ARE KNOWN, SO FAR AS THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS INDIA'S NEIGHBORS IS CONCERNED. INDIA'S NEIGHBORS SHOULD REMAIN ALL THE MORE VIGILANT IN VIEW OF THE RENEWED EXPRESSION OF THIS TRAIT OF INDIAN POLITICIANS".

3. COMMENT: SIKKIM CONTINUES TO STRIKE A VERY SENSITIVE NERVE IN NEPAL. ALTHOUGH THE OFFICIAL PRESS HAS NOT COMMENTED ON DESAI'S STATEMENT (PERHAPS IN VIEW OF THE IMPENDING SIGNATURE OF THE TRADE AND TRANSIT TREATIES), THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE OPINION WHICH HAS APPEARED IS WIDELY SHARED IN OFFICIAL CIRCLES.

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